



May 10, 2004

Linda Lake, Chair
Washington State Board of Health
PO Box 47990
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Chair Lake:

I am writing this memo to respectfully request that the State Board of Health adopt onsite wastewater rules that provide increased protection for Washington's marine waters. Recently I attended a briefing on the status of Hood Canal's marine health presented by the Puget Sound Action Team (PSAT). The PSAT described how the marine life in Hood Canal is facing severe challenges from low dissolved oxygen levels. In January 2004, dissolved oxygen levels were measured at record low levels, with trends showing a steady decline over the past 15 years.

While more data is necessary to better understand the problem, the PSAT estimates failing septic systems account for approximately 50 percent of the nitrogen loading in Hood Canal. Corrective actions, such as improving onsite septic system rules, are necessary to improve the health of Hood Canal. I support the position of the PSAT, which has identified the need for a minimum state rule that will provide:

- Effective onsite sewage regulatory programs in every jurisdiction that will guarantee the protection of public health and the environment.
- A baseline inventory of all onsite sewage systems in use that contains information on their location, ownership, and operating condition.
- Recognition that the risk to public health associated with onsite sewage system use is not measured only by the presence of bacterial contamination, i.e., nitrogen, synthetic organic compounds, and other chemicals from sewage pose health risks.
- Prioritized application of regulatory and management resources in geographic areas that are ranked by the relative risk posed by the use of onsite sewage systems in those areas.

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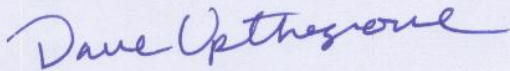
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WA STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

- Educated, responsible sewage system owners, who make sure that their systems are monitored and properly maintained, and who cooperate with local health personnel to document satisfactory system performance.

Thank you for your attention to my concerns, and for all of your work on the revision to the state's onsite wastewater rules.

Sincerely,



Representative Dave Upthegrove, Vice-Chair
House Fisheries, Ecology & Parks Committee

cc: Brad Ack, Chair, Puget Sound Action Team

Ron Shultz, Governor's Executive Policy Office

Mary Selecky, Secretary of Health
Washington State Department of Health

Steve Meyer, Legislative Liaison
Washington State Department of Health